

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Application of the Theory of Anticipatory Guidance to Identify the Anticipated Use of a Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics by Collegiate Student-athletes at a Division I University.

STUDENT: Kelsey Shapiro

DEGREE: Master of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics

COLLEGE: Applied Sciences and Technology

DATE: December 2015

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Over the past ten years there has been increased focus on the importance of nutrition to enhance athletic performance. However, evidence indicates a lack of appropriate nutrition services available to the student-athletes that can help student-athletes' translate the critical nature of the nutrition-performance connection. Currently, only 33 of the 120 Bowl Championship eligible football Division I university programs employ a full time certified specialist in sports dietetics (CSSD). Without access to these experts, collegiate student-athletes often acquire nutrition information from questionable sources. The purpose of this study was to survey the NCAA Division 1 (DI) student-athletes at a mid-major university to assess the sport-nutrition knowledge, attitudes, and opinions of the student-athletes toward having access to a full time sports CSSD through the athletic department staff. An online survey was used. A total of 134 student-athletes completed this study (59.7% female; 40.3% male). Results indicated student-athletes currently do not have adequate nutrition knowledge; mean scores of nutrition knowledge, both overall and by construct, were below 70%, a level often considered as "passing" or "adequate." Student-athletes indicated they feel most comfortable approaching registered dietitians/nutritionists, strength and conditioning specialists, and athletic trainers as

their primary sources of nutrition information; in practice, however, the student-athletes indicated they rely on the Internet and strength and conditioning specialists as their primary sources of nutrition information. Student-athletes indicated that nutrition was “very important” to athletic performance and that access to a certified specialist in sports dietetics (CSSD) would be “very beneficial” to their athletic performance. Student-athletes identified a variety of topics about which they would consult a CSSD if one was hired, including meal planning and making healthy choices. The results of this study demonstrate the need for sports-related nutrition education for student-athletes and provides evidence of the anticipated potential benefits of a CSSD to student-athletes. It is hoped the results of this study can be used to encourage University athletic departments in mid-major universities to establish and fill a sports dietitian position in an effort to enhance and optimize athletic performance.